THE XXth CENTURY

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THE END OF THE WAR IN EUROPE

THE world has witnessed a drama of gigantic proportions. Its stage—the whole of Europe; its actors—all European and many other nations; its name? Let future generations decide on that. We are still too close to events. But even today we can see that many factors came together to start the drama off.

There was, first, Germany after the defeat in the first World War. The mental state of that nation in the twenties—disappointment, frustration, inner strife, groping for new ideas—has often been described.

Then there was Adolf Hitler, whose every character trait will be a topic of dissension among historians and psychologists for generations to come, except that his one consuming passion was his vision of Germany, to which he dedicated his life with fanatical single-mindedness. National Socialism was the great promise Hitler held out to the German people. The rift between reactionary nationalists and antinationalist socialists was the source of profound antagonism within the nation. The very suggestion that this need not be so, that the two strongest emotions of postwar Germany—socialism and nationalism—did not have to be bitterly hostile opposites but could and should be one, stirred the people to the hope that the end of fratricidal dissension and the Versailles shackles, that the beginning of a new era for them and all Europe, were in sight. In 1932, in the last Reichstag election before he came into power, Hitler received 34 per cent of all votes cast. His amazing successes during the ensuing years brought him still more followers, although there remained many who disagreed with certain features and trends of his regime.

There were, thirdly, the many other countries. (In a more comprehensive study it would be necessary here, too, to consider people and leaders separately, in the Soviet Union, for example, and particularly in America, where the masses held isolationist and pacifist views until Roosevelt brought about a change in their outlook.) Future students of recent European history will, once the present atmosphere of hatred and prejudice has subsided, realize that many of Germany's actions were motivated by those of the other nations and by the evil, suspicious mentality prevailing between the wars, a mentality deadly to the growth of harmony and confidence among the people of Europe.

It was with a heavy heart that the Germans entered the second World War. The memory of the first one was still too fresh. All the many victories of the early phase of the war failed to create any war enthusiasm, as the people felt that real victory was still far off. Yet, once the war was on, the German nation with few exceptions was united in its determination to make every sacrifice so as not to lose a second world war within one generation. Millions gave everything they had—all earthly possessions, the lives of their dear ones, their own lives.

For the last few years the Allied countries have been flooded with declarations accusing the Germans of every monstrosity and wickedness under the sun in order to whip up ever new hatred against Germany. Yet, through the smoke of burning German cities, out of the ruins of countless homes, from the graves of millions of German soldiers, women, and children, and even through the fog of concentrated propaganda, one fact stands out: the heroism of an entire nation which, in a hopeless situation, fought to the bitter end. Standing alone on the Continent against three world empires, the Germans did not concede defeat or cease the struggle to which they had pledged themselves at the side of their ally Japan until 95 per cent of their country was occupied by Allied armies, until the rest was cut up into small, unconnected pockets, until their commander in chief had fallen, until their factories and lines of communications were bombed to shreds, their stocks of gasoline, ammunition, and food exhausted.

The Third Reich is dead, but the German nation lives and will continue to live. And wherever there is life, there can be no end without a new beginning. This beginning is dreadfully hard for Germany. The country has been devastated by the worst catastrophe in its history. Its human and material substance has been reduced as in no other great nation in modern times. Its vision of a powerful and prosperous Germany leading a Greater Europe into a new and happy era has been shattered. Its territory is being cut up into zones of occupation. Its sons, after six years of warfare and suffering, are condemned to labor in foreign lands.

Its agrarian east is separated from its industrial west. Famine stares into the face of millions of its homeless families, as many leaders in the anti-German coalition do not seem to realize that the remedy for the evils of Versailles is not a super-Versailles.

But life goes on, and there is a tremendous amount of work to be done. Cities, railways, and factories have to be rebuilt; fields that lay waste to be tilled; schools and libraries to be restored; the wounded nursed, the orphans taken care of — all this for a long time to come with very little to eat and with no other clothes to wear save those which have survived six years of war.

What is going on in the minds of the German people now, we do not know. It will be a long time before the extraordinary experiences of one generation — defeat in two world wars and the successive collapse of monarchy, liberal republic, and totalitarian state — can be digested, before people discover for themselves which of the ideas and developments of the last forty years were good for them and which were bad, before they find out which are the lessons to be learned from their own mistakes. But clarification will emerge from the sweat of purposeful, creative work. At which conclusions the Germans will arrive, which new ideas will emerge—that will be the great issue of their future.

In one more respect, the end of the war in Europe is at the same time the signal for a new beginning. For almost a full decade, world politics were dominated by the existence of two camps, Axis and Allies. The collapse of Germany has deprived Japan of her partner. But it may also have spelled the end of the Allies' co-operation. Enmity against Hitler Germany was by far the principal bond holding their alliance together, and the many differences of opinion within the Allied camp grew stronger in the same proportion in which Hitler Germany became weaker. During those very hours in which the leading German anti-Bolsheviks fought their death struggle against the Red Army in the flaming ruins of Berlin, the nations assembled in San Francisco outvoted the Soviet Union 31:4 on an important issue. This is but a proof that every political constellation is subject to change.

The Germans will derive no advantage from this; on the contrary, they will have to exert utmost caution if they do not want to be involved in possible conflicts between the Red and White camps emerging from the crumbling coalition. They will have to concentrate on domestic reconstruction and the preservation of national unity in a period of partition and at the same time to guard themselves against relapsing into resentful pessimism. It will be their task to cultivate an open mind and the readiness to collaborate in the building of a better future with other nations, which must also learn from the mistakes all have made in the past. They must be mindful of their country's position as a traditional clearinghouse of humanity's ideas and retain the sure knowledge that, no matter how the victors may treat them, they will always be an essential member of the European family of nations, a member which, having suffered most from the convulsions of our time, is more anxious than any other people to build a just and durable social and international order.

Fallen as no other nation in modern times from the pinnacle of high hopes to the depth of defeat among the ruins of their country, the Germans will survive if, in their own hearts, they succeed in seeing in the events of the last few months not only an end but also a beginning. The peoples of Europe, in turn, should bear in mind that the attempt to rebuild Europe after the first World War against or without Germany was a failure. May the end of this European war lead to a new beginning of European co-operation.

TO OUR READERS

Our magazine was founded under the conditions of the summer of 1941. When the spreading of the European war isolated East Asia from the rest of the world, *The XXth Century* served for many thousands of subscribers—and, through the reprinting of most of its articles in Chinese, Japanese, French, Russian, and other publications, an even wider circle of readers from the Amur River to Burma—as a window onto the outer world, particularly onto Europe. Although cut off from these regions, the editors and authors of the magazine felt that they could contribute to the understanding of developments there as long as these ran along lines which they themselves had still witnessed in Europe and America. With the end of the war in Europe on May 8, 1945, the nations of Europe have entered upon an entirely new road which we are unable to judge or to interpret at this distance. And so we bid farewell to our readers and contributors, thanking them for their encouragement and support.